

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening -Robert Frost

Summary

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening is one of Robert Frost's finest poems.

"Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow."

— The narrator (the poet himself) of the poem, stops by some woods on his way one evening. The narrator knows the owner of the woods and even where he lives. He is a bit relaxed thinking that the owner of the woods lives in the village and so he won't see the narrator stopping here. Therefore he can continue watching the natural beauty of his snow-covered woods.

"My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year."

— In the second stanza, the narrator of the poem says that his dear horse, whom he is using as his carriage, must think it strange to stop here between the woods and the frozen lake in a dark evening, as he normally stops near a farmhouse. The narrator calls his horse "my little horse", as it is very dear to him. He also personifies the horse by indicating that it has a thought process and also referring it as "he" in the next stanza.

In this stanza the narrator suggest that the weather is cold enough to freeze a lake. The expression 'darkest evening' refer to the longest night of the year – the night with the most hours of darkness.

"He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sounds the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake."

— The horse is shaking its head ringing the bell attached to its harness, as if 'he' is asking his master whether there is any problem, as it is unusual for him to stop by the woods in the darkness. And the important thing in this stanza of the poem Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening is the sound imageries. There is only three sounds – the sounds of the harness bell, light wind and the snowflakes.

“The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.”

— Here in the last stanza the narrator describes the woods using three adjectives – lovely, dark and deep. This indicates that he is enjoying the scene and wants to do so for long. But he has other responsibilities in life. He has to go a long way before he sleeps. So he cannot get the enjoyment for long. He has to move on. And the important thing here is that the poet repeats the last line to attract the attention of the readers. Here “sleep” may refer to death. We, in our real life, have many things to look at with awe, many things to enjoy, but in most cases we cannot simply because we have other things to do in our short lifespan, so we have to move on.

The ‘woods’ here may also suggest the distractions and temptations in the journey of our life. The poet may mean that we should not pay heed to those outward temptations. We should stay focused on our goal and try to reach it in time. We must fulfill our duties before we die, so we have no time to look at other things on the way.